

HIV Vaccine Awareness Day – May 18th. Real People. Real Progress.

SAMPLE NEWSLETTER

HIV Vaccine Awareness Day
May 18, 2004

HIV Vaccine Research: Real People. Real Progress.

May 18th is HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. It is a day to educate Americans about the need for vaccines to prevent HIV. This year's theme is "Real People. Real Progress." We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of thousands of study volunteers, scientists and health professionals committed to finding a safe and effective vaccine. With the help of these people behind the science, much progress has been made toward developing a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine. Currently, there are over 20 promising HIV vaccine candidates in various stages of testing. Yet, there is still no vaccine. We are all in this together. All Americans, especially at-risk populations, such as communities of color and those who are sexually active, need to learn more about HIV vaccine research and be a part of making an HIV vaccine a reality.

The statistics are staggering. Today, approximately 40 million people around the world are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 37 million are adults and 2.5 million are children under the age of 15. In the United States, 40,000 people contract HIV each year, with half of all new infections occurring in young people under the age of 25. That is more than 100 people per day. Nearly fifty percent of those new infections in the United States are among people of color.

Despite grim statistics, [insert organization name] shares the hope for developing a truly effective HIV vaccine someday. Overall, great strides have been made against HIV/AIDS, as evidenced by the progress that prevention and treatment programs have made. Prevention efforts in the U.S. have reduced HIV infections from approximately 150,000 per year to around 40,000 per year, and in treatment, we have seen the positive impact of advances in HIV therapies. Scientists believe they are getting closer to finding an effective preventive HIV vaccine and are working to speed up the research process. More vaccines are being tested than ever before, and the number of HIV vaccine trial sites is expanding worldwide.

Community Participation is Essential. By raising awareness and encouraging study participation, individuals and communities can contribute to the successful development of HIV vaccines. Although over 12,000 people have already volunteered to take part in HIV vaccine studies, many more will be needed. A large HIV vaccine trial will require thousands more HIV negative participants of all races/ethnicities, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure that the vaccine works in all populations.

Therefore, community support is essential in efforts to break down stigma and myths about HIV vaccine research. Developing an effective HIV vaccine depends upon individuals and communities informing, educating and supporting others. And this is why [insert organization name] is [insert activity or event taking place in support of HVAD] to demonstrate our support and commitment to find an HIV vaccine.

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*May 18th. Wear your
Red AIDS Ribbon upside down*



HIV Vaccine Awareness Day is commemorated with an upside-down AIDS Ribbon. The upside-down red AIDS ribbon brings attention to HIV Vaccine Awareness Day and gives individuals a unique way to show their personal awareness about HIV vaccine research. The upside-down red AIDS ribbon forms a “V,” for “vaccines,” the vision of a world without AIDS, and symbolizes the urgent need to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. By encouraging people to wear their red AIDS ribbon upside down on May 18, we are recognizing the value of HIV vaccine research, the commitment to find vaccines that work and the advances that are being made.

What can you do? You as an individual can take action to show your support for HIV vaccine research and HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. Here are just some of the things you can do:

- Wear your red AIDS ribbon upside down and explain why you are doing so when asked.
- Let others know you support HIV vaccine research.
- Educate others about the need for an HIV vaccine.
- Support vaccine trial volunteers and/or volunteer yourself.

To learn more about HIV Vaccine Awareness Day or HIV vaccine research, visit www.aidsinfo.nih.gov, www.vrc.nih.gov or www.hvtn.org or call 800-HIV-0440 for a free brochure (available in English and Spanish).